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THERE is far too much energy nowadays bestowed upon the production of imitations of costly decorative materials, in materials which in themselves cost little or nothing.

THE field occupied by wall-paper and its allied products is proper enough, but the great success that has attended the reproduction of the effects of more costly materials in wall-paper has extended to imitations that are neither beautiful nor commendable, even from methods of economy. For example: the leaf and legs of a table that are made of wood which is coated with a paper representing Mexican onyx, is going a long way out of the way to get something for nothing.

ONE of the greatest evils of the present age is the rising tide of snobbery in things artistic. We refer to that pernicious habit of struggling to imitate rich effects in cheap materials, which is done more than anything else to debase art. Every material demands respect, for it has in itself a durability and suitability which is lost or wasted if it is made to imitate something else. A wooden chimneypiece painted to imitate marble is simply a caricature of a more beautiful material. If we cannot afford marble pillars and inlaid furniture and well-designed ornament on the walls, do without them altogether, and choose some simpler style, in which every material used can be the best of its kind. The effect thus produced will be infinitely more satisfactory than could ever be obtained by paint and plaster to look like marble and graining deal to imitate oak.

IN decoration, always more than anywhere else, we must learn how much the half is better than the whole. A superabundance of even the choicest ornaments weary the eye and obtrude themselves unpleasantly upon the notice. The room is simply a frame or background, and one must keep in mind what will best set off the picture it is destined to contain. No pattern, however good, is so restful to the eye or mind as plain color. One of the greatest errors on the part of amateurs and decorators is the constant danger of overloading our rooms with ornament. As to dedecoration, pray you, avoid it.

IN the decoration of interiors, a fixed principle is to always secure a considerable amount of plain neutral color in the room. It is not generally known that one reason why old painted windows are so much more brilliant in effect than most modern ones is that in the best period of painted glass this maximum was always borne in mind, and that nearly three-fourths of a painted window were composed of white glass. By this means their bright colors lose none of their brilliancy by juxtaposition with each other.

IT must be remembered that the mind which is feasted on the wonders of fiction has no taste for the insipidity of truth. To those who have lived in rooms with glaring wall-papers, white ceilings, gaudy carpets and twisted furniture, the soft coloring, the absence of contrast and the simple lines in the furniture which suggest the best period of decoration will appear sombre and uninteresting. It is only after living some time in such surroundings that we can test the restful pleasure they afford. There is a benediction of rest in simplicity of walls, carpet and draperies, on which the less ornament the better. Give us the lasting beauty of soft spaces of undisturbed color.

THE chief beauty of hanging drapery should be looked for in the folds in which it naturally falls. In choosing material for curtains this should never be forgotten, provided you have the color which harmonizes with the other coloring in the room, and provided you have also a material which falls into natural and soft artistic folds—your curtains, though simple and inexpensive, are sure to be successful. On the other hand, no number of other good qualities, such as beauty of design and pattern, will compensate for the loss of these qualities. For bedroom hangings nothing is better than some kind of material like chintz or cretonne, which can be washed or cleaned frequently, or replaced at a comparatively small cost when it becomes thoroughly saturated with smoke and dust.

IN determining the color of a room, it should be borne in mind that harmony of tint is more desirable than contrast. The woodwork should, as a rule, be tinted either the same color as that used on the walls, or, at any rate, a shade of the same color. The color of the walls and frieze should also be analogous, the color used in the frieze being in harmony with that of the paper, and not in a violent contrast. If the frieze is ornamented, the pattern may be in some color which would form a harmonious link between the wall and frieze. The walls of a room should be more solid in color than either the frieze or ceiling, otherwise the room is apt to look top-heavy. It is best to tint or decorate the ceiling in light shades of color, as the ceiling, being a great reflector of light, whether natural or artificial, its color has a profound relation to the cheerfulness of the apartment itself. Where the wall is destined for pictures, a flat and unobtrusive background is the most sensible method of wall decoration. Where there are no pictures, a paper of good design may be substituted for the plain tint, and there are wall-papers now made possessing far more artistic merit than many of the family or other portraits with which the walls are too often disfigured.

ART is the religion of the pagan, and so all-powerful was pagan art in its time that it impressed itself upon Christianity, which, in the beginning, was without symbols or adornment, and was fain to garb itself in the symbolism and decorative grandeur of the pagan world. In the beginning the young church possessed no images of suffering or punishment, no crucifixion, not even a martyrdom, though bleeding from its wounds. The imagery of paganism found ready welcome in the Church, but fraught with a new meaning. The crown of the emperor became the reward of the blessed, the palm of the victorious athlete the martyr's emblem. The dove becomes the visible sign of the Holy Spirit, Juno's peacock becomes the symbol of immortality, Diana's stag the hart of the psalmist. Each dethroned goddess pays tribute to Mary, the queen of heaven. Diana's crescent, Minerva's serpent, lie beneath her feet. Cybele gives the chair of state,

Circe the aureole, Juno the matron's veil and crown, Flora her roses and lilies, and Isis places the Divine child in Mary's arms. Here even are the heroes of Greek myth, chosen for some likeness to the founder of Christianity: Mercury leading the spirits of the departed; Orpheus drawing all men to him by the power of music; Hercules delivering the oppressed, performing the tasks and bearing the burdens of others. In this Christianized Pantheon, the only purely new symbols are the fish, the monogram of Christ, the cross, the ship struggling through the waves, and the lamb. The Good Shepherd, loveliest figure of all, was a precious heritage from Greece.

A CHICAGO decorator is publishing a series of handbooks on the various decorative styles, which he entitles *Parlor Conversations on Style and Interior Decoration*. He is not a prophet of a new style, but evidently believes in adopting the styles of other times and other people as the correct thing for American interiors. He says: "According to artistic inclinations you may decorate your dining-room in Empire style, have a Renaissance reception-room, a Marie Antoinette chamber, a Romanesque library, a Gothic chapel, an Ionic natatorium, a Corinthian music-room, an Oriental smoking-room, and a Byzantine conservatory, according to your predilections for such and such styles, and such and such harmonies." This is a pretty good mixture of styles for any one modern individual to live up to, but the best reply to make such a wholesale steal of foreign ideas is to quote the author's description of "Madame X's Modern Parlor" on another page of the same pamphlet, as follows:

"Let us now penetrate for a few minutes within the modern parlor of one of our western millionaires. First, our attention is captivated by an extravagant Louis XV. frescoed ceiling, with introduction of an artistic centre panel, by a distinguished German artist. The border on the ceiling is really of rich Rococo ornamentation, and the grand panel an artistic inspiration, which produced a complete discord with the bold and severe Empire wall decoration and the Corinthian woodwork. The contrast is so sudden that we look for a resting-place and are astonished to fall over a large Renaissance sofa, upholstered with a religious Gothic tapestry.

"The discord is reinforced by a costly and highly-colored Oriental rug, when on a colossal feudal Romanesque mantel-piece we discover a sweet Louis XVI. clock, guarded by two severe Henri VI. candelabras. The lace curtains are Marie Antoinette, the over-draperies made of hanging ropes, and the portières made of Japanese bamboo. In the middle of our amazement the hostess comes in with the indispensable pair of puffed sleeves, and, after a few words of usual introduction, makes it a point to call our attention to all the artistic creations and masterpieces of art she bought when on her last European tour.

"There is a fine Vernis Martin Louis XV. cabinet direct from Paris, a handsome Venetian mirror, a sweet Louis XVI. centre-table, a full assortment of chairs in Empire, Louis XIV., Greek and Roman styles, a fine pair of Japanese vases, a Moorish lantern, a Turkish tabouret, a Bagdad table-cover, high art bronzes and marbles, a rich and extravagant Rococo bric-à-brac stand covered with about one hundred different souvenirs; and cups and saucers from all over the world, a wild cat's fur, an African lion's head and a polar bear's skin completed the menagerie.

"Now if you call this conglomeration artistic and stylish you are entirely mistaken, as it is only an exhibition and poor display of artistic productions, and of Oriental and Occidental curiosities, well adapted to furnish a museum, but not to artistically decorate a parlor where you are to live in the middle of reveries, affection and love."

The writer (whose grammar sadly requires revision) rightfully condemns the jumble of styles crowded into a single apartment, but why the selfsame jumble of styles crowded together under a single roof is not equally reprehensible we fail to see. Our decorator has evidently yet to learn a great deal about decorative art. If he be either unwilling or unable to make a serious study of the organic needs of an age or a people, that he may furnish the individual with a fitting environment, but chooses instead to resurrect the styles of defunct periods, he is only a blind leader of the blind and his work is pretentious folly.